



SCYTHROPS NOVÆ-HOLLANDIÆ, *Lath.*

Channel-Bill.

Scythrops Novæ-Hollandiæ, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 141.—Temm. Man. d'Orn., tom. i. p. lxxv.—Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 306.—Temm. Pl. Col., 290.—Vieill. Gal. des Ois., tom. i. pl. 39.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 128. pl. 23. fig. 1.—Ib. Man. d'Orn., tom. ii. p. 128.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd Edit., p. 73.—Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxx. p. 456.—Ib. Ency. Méth., tom. iii. p. 1427.

Psittaceous Hornbill, Phil. Bot. Bay, pl. in p. 165.

Anomalous Hornbill, White's Journ., pl. in p. 142.

Channel-Bill, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 96. pl. 124.

Australasian Channel-Bill, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 378. pl. 50.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 300. pl. xxxii.

Scythrops Australasiæ, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 378.—Ib. Steph. Cont., vol. xiv. p. 95.

————— *Australis*, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 299.

Curriay-gun, Aborigines of New South Wales.

THIS remarkable bird, which has been considered a Hornbill by some naturalists, and as nearly allied to the Toucans by others, is in reality a member of the family *Cuculidæ* or Cuckoos; an examination of its structure and a comparison of it with that of the other species of the family will render this very apparent, and I may add, that the little I saw of it in a state of nature fully confirms the opinion here given; its habits, actions, and mode of flight are precisely the same, as is also the kind of food upon which it subsists, except that it devours the larger kinds of *Phasmidæ* and *Coleoptera* instead of the smaller kinds of insects eaten by the other members of the family, and that it occasionally feeds upon fruits; the changes too which it undergoes from youth to maturity are exactly similar.

It is a migratory bird in New South Wales, arriving in October and departing again in January; whither it proceeds is not known, but as it has not been found out of Australia nor even on the north coast of that country, it cannot retire very far. As I had but few opportunities of observing it myself, I cannot do better than transcribe the particulars recorded by Latham, who in the second volume of his 'General History of Birds,' says, "It is chiefly seen in the morning and evening, sometimes in small parties of seven or eight, but more often in pairs; both on the wing and when perched it makes a loud screaming noise when a hawk or other bird of prey is in sight. In the crop and gizzard the seeds of the red gum and peppermint trees have been found; it is supposed that they are swallowed whole, as the pericarp or capsule has been found in the stomach; exuviae of beetles have also been seen, but not in any quantity. The tail, which is nearly the length of the body, is occasionally displayed like a fan, and gives the bird a majestic appearance. The natives appear to know but little of its habits or haunts; they consider its appearance as an indication of blowing weather, and that its frightful scream is through fear, as it is not a bird of very active or quick flight. It is not easily tamed, for Mr. White observes, that he kept a wounded one alive for two days, during which it would eat nothing, but bit everything that approached it very severely."

New South Wales is the only one of the Australian colonies whence I have seen examples of this bird. Most naturalists will be anxious to know if, like the other Cuckoos, this species is parasitic; unfortunately however I am not able to clear up this point: but I possess an egg which has been recently sent me by Mr. Strange of Sydney; it is fully developed, and he informs me was taken by himself from the ovarium of a female after he had shot the bird. It is of a light stone-colour, marked all over, but particularly at the larger end, with irregular blotches of reddish brown, many of which are of a darker hue and appear as if beneath the surface of the shell; it is one inch eleven-sixteenths long by one inch and a quarter broad.

The sexes are alike in plumage, but the female is somewhat smaller than the male.

Head, neck and breast grey; all the upper surface, wings and tail greenish olive-grey, each feather largely tipped with blackish brown; tail crossed near the extremity by a broad band of black and tipped with white, which gradually increases in extent as the feathers recede from the centre; the inner webs are also largely toothed with white, which is bounded posteriorly with a broad streak of black; under surface of the wing and body buffy white crossed with indistinct bars of greyish brown, which gradually deepen in colour on the flanks and thighs; orbits and lores scarlet; bill light yellowish horn-colour; feet olive-brown.

The Plate represents a male rather less than the natural size.